

Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Best Practices
On sustainable Rural Livelihoods in the ESCWA Region
Beirut, 24-25 November 2010

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS
IN THE ESCWA REGION:
EVALUATION OF SUCCESSES AND FAILURES**

by

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Rural Development Policies and Programs in the ESCWA Region: Evaluation of Successes and Failures

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24 November 2010

Objective and outline



- Set the scene by providing a brief characterization of rural development policies and programs in the ESCWA region
- Assess progress towards stated goals: poverty reduction, food security and rural migration, etc.
- Give an overview of some success stories
- Reflect on how SLA can help build upon and scale-up achieved gains

Evolution of Rural Development

- Rural development concepts have evolved over time:



- Driven mainly by global development agendas:
 - Agenda 21 (1992): Chapter 14 “promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development”
 - Millennium Development Goals (2000)
 - Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002): Chapter 2 “Poverty Eradication”

Rio +20 and Rural Development

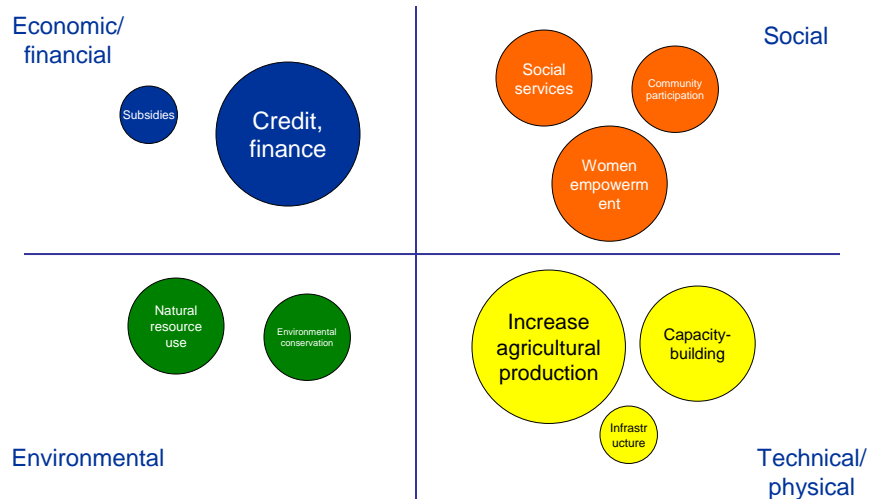
- Evolution of rural development concepts is expected to continue post Rio +20 (2012), with more investments in, and prominence given to “green economy” sectors such as:
 - Sustainable agriculture: Organic, rainfed, Fairtrade, etc.
 - Land and water management: e.g. Water reclamation, water efficiency, biodiversity protection, reforestation, etc.
 - Rural electrification using renewable energy

Features of Rural Development Policies in the Arab Region



- Stated goals are similar ...
 - Eradicate poverty
 - Increase food security
 - Mitigate rural migration
- ... but approaches are diverse ...
 - Social/human development
 - Economic/financial
 - Technical/physical
 - Environmental

Rural Development Approaches in the Arab Region



Source: Compiled by ESCWA based on AOAD report on rural development in the Arab Region (13 Arab countries included).

Unpromising Results



- Rural poverty increasing, with rural poverty rates higher than urban rates
- Rural exodus increasing
- Increasing food security risks
- Increasing desertification
- Inadequate agricultural productivity
- Growth without equity, for example, rural areas have:
 - higher under-five mortality rates
 - less available health and education services
 - more prevalent undernourishment rates
 - more insecurity
 - Etc.

Exacerbated by global & regional crises



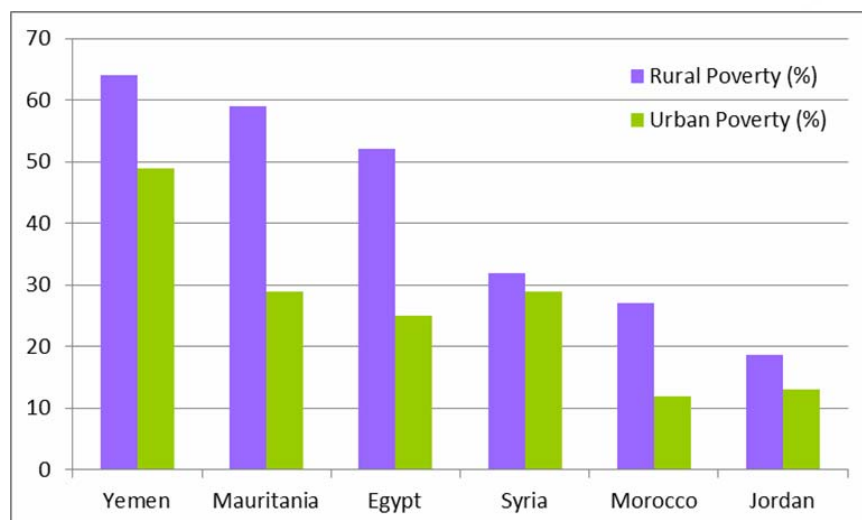
Global Level: Triple Crisis

- **Financial crisis** (2007-current) – worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, resulting loss of jobs and income
- **Food price crisis** – 1 billion people worldwide at risk of hunger and malnutrition. Hunger has increased in 2009 because of high food prices and rising unemployment in the global recession
- **Climate crisis** – extreme events, climate variability increasing uncertainty

Regional Level: Security Threats

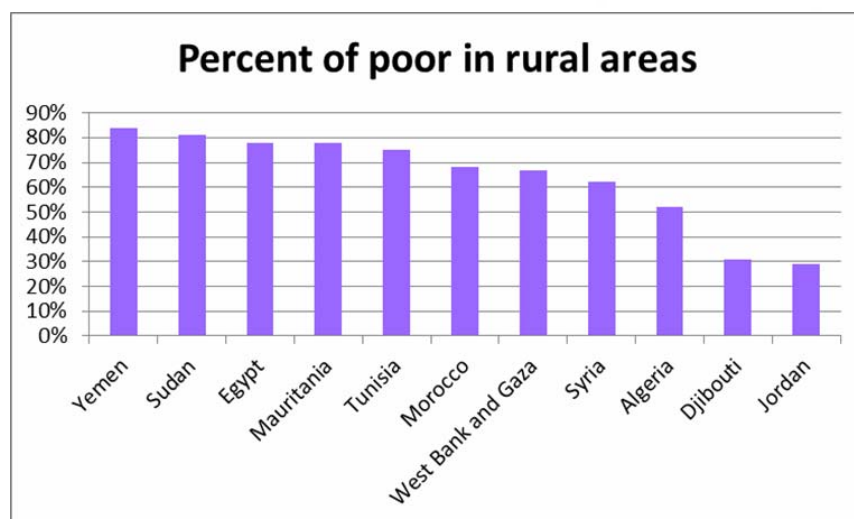
- **Water Security** – *Water scarcity and water stress characteristic of nearly all Arab countries*
- **Food Security** – reorientation of policy framework from food self-sufficiency to food security
- **Energy Security** – implications for energy importing and exporting countries
- **Political instability and crisis** – threatening sustainable development gains in many regions

Rural poverty is higher than urban poverty



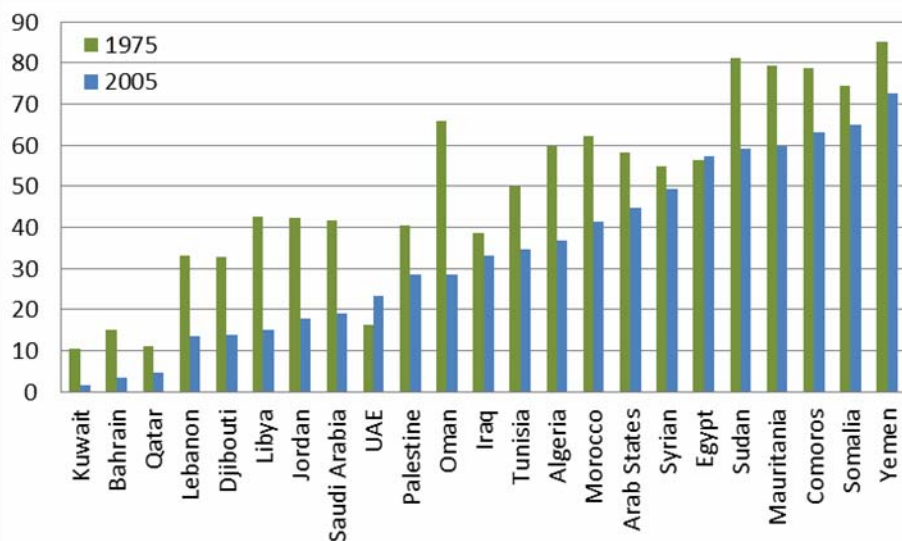
Source: UNDP, Arab Human Development Report 2009 (Data for different years)

Poverty is concentrated in rural areas



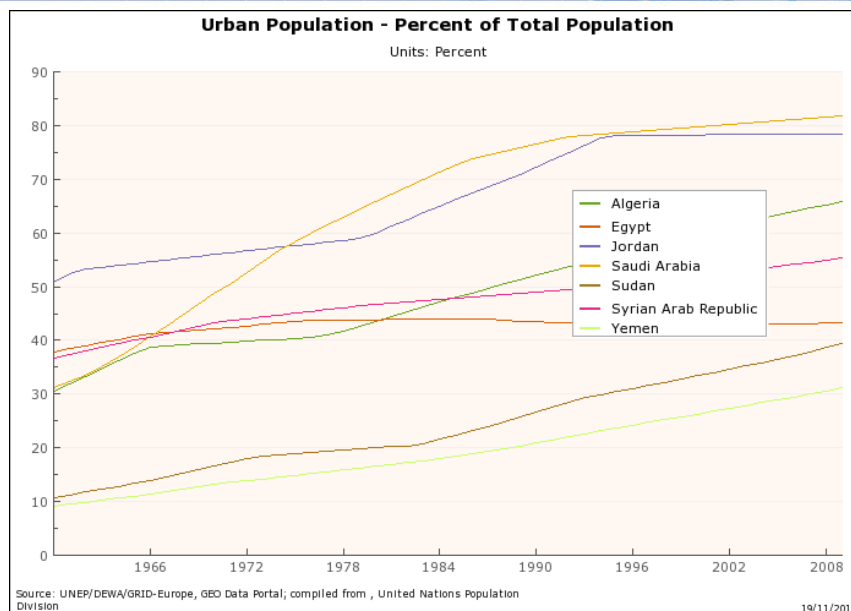
Source: World Bank/FAO/IFAD 2009; Improving Food Security in Arab Countries

Rural population in the Arab countries is decreasing

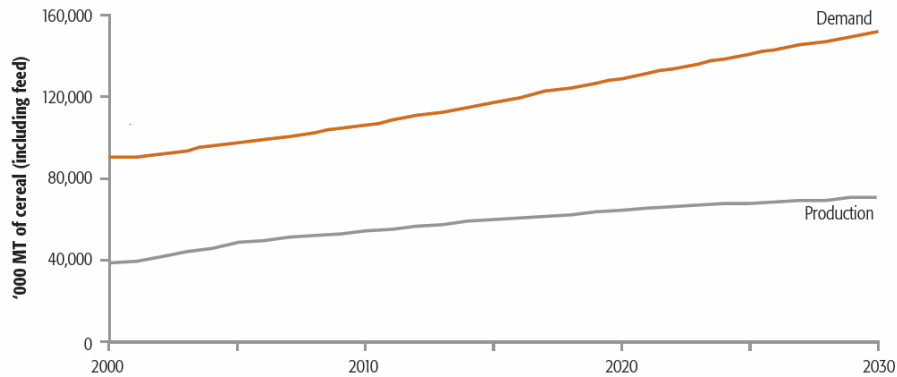


Source: UNDP, Arab Human Development Report 2009

Urbanization is increasing

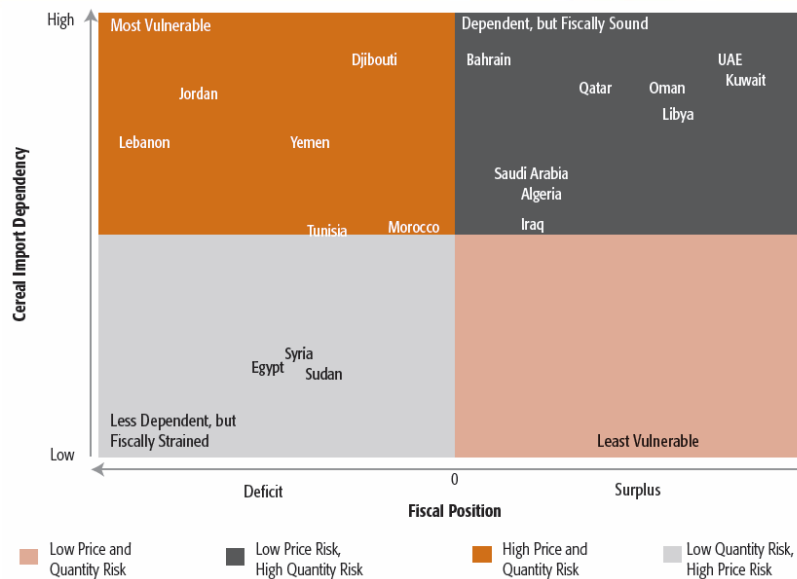


Food demand outweighs production



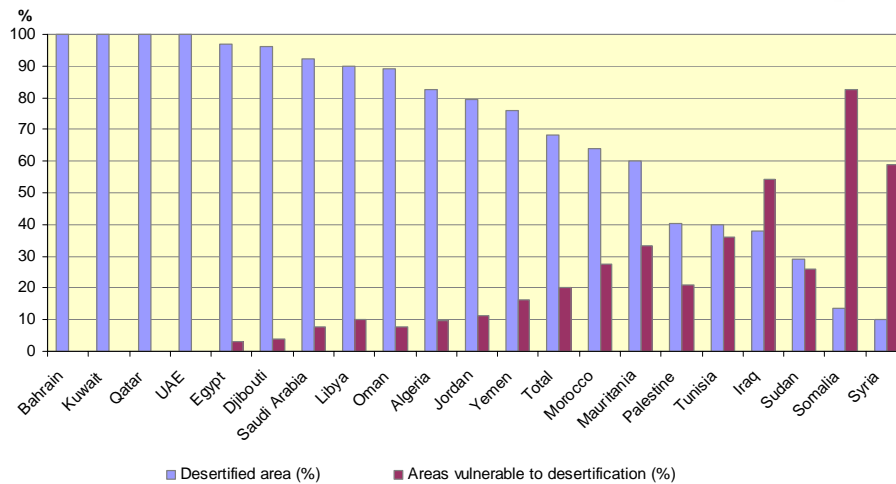
Source: World Bank/FAO/IFAD 2009; Improving Food Security in Arab Countries

Arab Countries with High Cereal Import Dependency and Large Fiscal Deficits are Most Vulnerable



Source: World Bank/FAO/IFAD 2009; Improving Food Security in Arab Countries

Vulnerability to desertification



Source: A. Abahussain et al., 2002, Desertification in the Arab Region: analysis of current status and trends

Low agricultural productivity



Country	Employment in Agriculture (%)*	Contribution of Agriculture to GDP (Share of total)**
Yemen	53%	9%
Egypt	31%	15%
Syria	30%	20%
Iraq	23%	6%

* Various years

** 2008

Source: Employment: ILO (LABORSTA); Value Added: UN National Accounts Main Aggregates Database

On a positive note...



- “Success stories” from the region are abundant in the literature
- The following examples, taken from the papers presented during the last Expert Group Meeting on SLA, are only a representative few
- All have in one way or another improved the livelihoods of the beneficiary communities

Representative success stories (1)



Oman:
Modern water
conserving
irrigation
systems

- Public-private partnership program
- 20% of total cultivated area equipped with these systems and plan to continue increasing equipped area by 5% more land each year
- **Impact: 30% water use reduction in irrigation contributed to lower water deficit**

Yemen:
Decentralization
and community
participation

- Local government law guarantees independence of budget and local development plan
- Capacity building program for elected local councils
- **Impact: Community participation in local development expanded, and more efficient use of resources**

Representative success stories (2)



Jordan: Entrepreneurship and productivity promotion

- 22 support centers in rural areas
- Offer advisory, training and financial services to small and medium enterprises to develop income generating projects
- **Impact:** Support for 4,000 productive projects and 13,000 job opportunities

Syria: Information and communication technology access points

- 41 centers in rural areas (up to 2007)
- Offer internet connectivity, IT services and training
- **Impact:** IT literacy reduced with positive impact particularly for the young

Representative success stories (3)



Palestine: Empowering rural women

- Institutionalize the process through the establishment of a dedicated directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture
- Capacity-building programs targeting women
- **Impact:** Increased income for women, especially in agriculture

Egypt: Targeting the most vulnerable

- 1,000 poorest villages
- Provide infrastructure (water, electricity, etc.), education, environmental, housing and health services
- **Impact:** Provided a springboard to allow further development efforts to take place

What do these initiatives have in common?



- Respond to real need
- Facilitate access by rural communities to at least one type of capital asset (human, natural, financial, etc.)
- Aim at achieving a certain livelihood outcome
- Have a capacity-building component

Some reflections



- Why haven't these initiatives translated into tangible, sustainable development benefits in rural areas at the national/regional scales?
 - Issue of scale (i.e. need more of the same)?
 - Issue of entry points and priorities (i.e. need different types of initiatives)?
 - Issue of ownership and accountability (i.e. donor or government imposed)?
 - Issue of financial sustainability?

Concluding remarks



- It is hoped that SLA will provide:
 - The [analytical framework](#) needed for member countries to examine and reorient their rural development policies
 - The [tool](#) needed for rural development practitioners to design and implement sustainable initiatives whose benefits can accrue into tangible gains

Thank you

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